

PROJECT NARRATIVE Accessory Dwelling Unit Conversion

Property Address: 86 Sycamore Street, Somerville, MA 02145

Property Owner: Elizabeth Kwo

Contractor: Petrolini Home Improvement Inc. DBA LVL Builders, 8 Chester Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143 (HIC #175833 / #216967, CSL #106789)

Designer: Haus Group, Permit Set dated June 11, 2026

Project Overview

The applicant proposes to convert an existing freestanding accessory garage at the rear of the property into a two-bedroom, one-and-one-half-bath accessory dwelling unit (ADU) of approximately 555 square feet across two stories. The conversion reuses the existing structure in place. The existing footprint, siting, and orientation on the lot are preserved, and no expansion of the building footprint is proposed.

Existing Conditions

The existing structure is a single-story freestanding garage of approximately 288 square feet. It is constructed of concrete masonry unit (CMU) perimeter walls with a wood-framed exterior wall section, an overhead garage door on the primary elevation, and a flat EPDM membrane roof. The existing concrete slab and CMU walls are sound and will remain.

Proposed Work

The project converts the garage to a residential cottage while retaining the existing masonry shell and slab. The proposed scope includes:

- Retaining the existing CMU perimeter walls and concrete slab. The slab will be leveled and prepared to receive a new finished floor.
- Adding a second story framed off the existing floor structure, with existing joists sistered and reinforced to carry the new residential loads.
- Replacing the existing flat EPDM roof with a new pitched gable roof at a 4:12 slope, finished in architectural asphalt shingles.
- Infilling the former overhead garage door opening with a new framed and insulated wall section finished to match the surrounding exterior.
- Installing new windows throughout per the approved schedule (15 units), modestly scaled and arranged to suit the cottage massing.
- Installing a new residential entry door, frame, and hardware.
- Re-cladding the exterior in fiber cement (Hardie) board lap siding. Existing exposed masonry will be painted or re-clad to present a unified residential exterior.

Exterior Materials and Design Compatibility

The design is intended to read as a modest residential cottage consistent with the scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood. The replacement of the existing flat roof with a pitched gable roof introduces a traditional roof form more in keeping with the pitched-roof houses that define the streetscape. The proposed fiber cement lap siding presents the proportions and appearance of traditional wood clapboard while providing durability and low maintenance appropriate to the New England climate. Architectural asphalt shingles, painted trim, and the modest window proportions are consistent with the area's residential vernacular. Final siding and trim colors will be selected by the owner in coordination with the board's guidance.

Because the project reuses the existing structure and slab rather than demolishing and rebuilding, ground disturbance is minimal and the established footprint and rear siting are unchanged. The conversion adds residential living space within the existing building envelope and footprint while upgrading the structure's appearance from a utilitarian garage to a finished residential cottage compatible with the neighborhood.

